

# Will Wales benefit in any way from the 2012 Olympics?

Gareth England

**The 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games represent a huge investment by the UK Government, but what impact will they have on Wales?**

The first action of the London 2012 Olympics will take place on Welsh soil in a little over a year's time, as Cardiff hosts the opening game of the Olympic football tournament.

***The designation of the games as a UK-wide event means that there has been no Barnett consequential to Wales as a direct result of the Olympics***

The games have arguably already made a more significant impact on Wales and its population through the diversion of lottery funding which could otherwise have been earmarked for the development of grassroots sport.

It is not easy to pinpoint how much money will have been diverted in this way. Figures of up to £100 million have been estimated but the final total may not be truly quantifiable until after the games themselves.

Additionally, the designation of the games as a UK-wide event means that there has been no Barnett consequential to Wales as a direct result of the Olympics.

In the aftermath of the games, there will undoubtedly be calls for lottery funding to be restored to their previous levels, and there will be much scrutiny as to how quickly this happens.

## Contracts

Recent media reports have suggested that the number of Welsh firms successful in obtaining Tier 1 contracts with the Olympic Delivery Authority were low in comparison to the rest of the UK. Figures suggested that as of November 2010, 11 contracts had been awarded to Welsh companies compared with 726 in London and 25 in Scotland, although this figure had risen to 14 by March 2011, and some significant supply chain contracts had also been awarded to Welsh businesses.

The former Welsh Government had urged Welsh firms to apply for the remaining contracts and sub-contracts through its business support service, and has hosted events in north and south Wales to publicise available opportunities. It remains to be seen how many will be successful and add to the £38 million worth of contracts awarded to date.

***Wales is competing with other nations and regions of the UK for any people who might visit Wales whilst attending the games***

## Tourism

Tourism is another area where potential benefits from the Olympics may be seen. Cardiff does have a distinct advantage in that it will host part of the Olympic football tournament. Olympic and Paralympic teams from various nations have also agreed to base themselves in Cardiff and Swansea, but it would appear that Wales is competing with other nations and regions of the

UK for any people who might visit Wales whilst attending the games.

Likewise, commitments to partners and sponsors mean that major sporting events can seem to be held in a corporate bubble, leaving little or no opportunity for local culture to be seen, or be affected.

It is possible therefore, that aspects of Welsh culture and indeed the Welsh language will not be visible when events are held in Cardiff.

### **Sporting and cultural impact**

For a small nation, Wales has been relatively successful in producing Olympic and Paralympic medallists and Welsh athletes are again expected to do well in London. Wales also possesses sporting facilities of a high standard, so it would appear that there is a natural appetite for sport within the nation.

During the last Assembly, the then Minister for Heritage stated that the main aims in Wales would be to use the PR and the profile generated by the Olympics and link it to existing schemes.

These schemes, which include the 5x60 and Dragon Sport schemes in Welsh schools, the

#### **The 'Cultural Olympiad':**

- a four year UK-wide **cultural celebration** of the Olympics running from 2008 to 2012;
- administered in Wales by the **Arts Council of Wales**;
- 5 major projects in Wales under the £2.85 million **Power of the Flame** programme aimed at young people and disabled people.

Welsh strands of the Cultural Olympiad some of which tie in with the education curriculum and the Gemau Cymru project led by the Urdd, would appear to provide the potential for the most significant legacy of the games in Wales.

### **Participation**

The power of the Olympics to get adults participating in sport on a regular basis is one that has been questioned in research carried out following previous events in other countries.

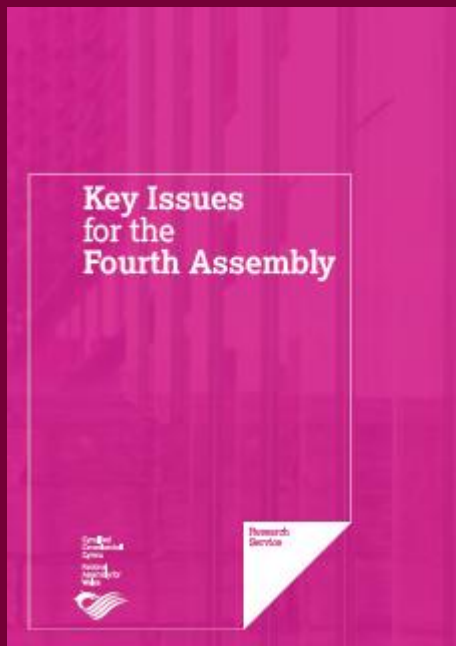
The previous UK Government's original Olympic legacy aims to get two million more people playing sport and exercising by 2013 would appear to have been scaled back by the current administration with the target of getting one million people doing general physical activity apparently being dropped.

Statistics on adult sports participation in Wales show 56 per cent of the population regularly participated in sport or physical recreation activity in 2008-09, slightly down on the 59 per cent from the previous survey in 2004-05.

Whilst there is no specific participation legacy commitment for Wales, the opportunity to use the games in various existing schemes to encourage sport and healthy living is one that the Welsh Government has appeared keen to promote.

Wales therefore has an opportunity to benefit culturally, socially and economically from the games. Its impact however will only become clearer in the run up and aftermath of the event.

# Article taken from Research Service publication



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This document has been specially prepared for Assembly Members by the Research Service. It sets out some of the key issues likely to matter to Members during the Fourth Assembly.

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